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Creation office of Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs

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CREATION OF OFFICE OF ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS.

APRIL 20, 1886.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. STORM, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 5787.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 5787) to create the office of Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs, having had the same under consideration, submit the following report:

A statement of the salaries paid to the three great Bureaus connected with the Department of the Interior, to wit, the Land Office, Pensions, and Patents, will readily show the disparity between the allowance to the Indian Office and that for the other Bureaus.

The following statement shows the salaries paid to the different Bureau officers of the Interior Department:

LAND OFFICE.

Commissioner.....	\$4,000
Assistant Commissioner.....	3,000
Chief clerk.....	2,225
	<hr/>
	9,225

PENSION OFFICE.

Commissioner.....	5,000
First Deputy Commissioner.....	3,600
Second Deputy Commissioner.....	3,600
Chief clerk.....	2,500
Assistant chief clerk.....	2,000
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	16,700

PATENT OFFICE.

Commissioner.....	5,000
Assistant Commissioner.....	3,000
Chief clerk.....	2,250
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	10,250

INDIAN OFFICE.

Commissioner.....	4,000
Chief clerk.....	2,000
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	6,000

The proposed bill does not create an additional office, but simply creates a new title—Assistant Commissioner—and requires him to perform all the duties now pertaining to the office of chief clerk, as well as the duties of Commissioner in the absence of that officer.

The work of this Bureau is constantly increasing. The increase in the year 1885 over 1884 was over 30 per cent., and the increase for the first quarter of 1886 over the first quarter 1885, has been over 33½ per cent.; and the increase for the three past months over a similar period in 1884 is about 46 per cent.

It deals with 260,000 Indians, scattered over a vast extent of territory. It is charged with the execution of almost numberless treaties and agreements made with the Indians. It oversees the whole subject of Indian education and civilization. To accomplish these purposes it pays out in money and property nearly \$6,000,000, under 400 heads and subheads of appropriations.

The duties of the Indian Commissioner are not only arduous and multiform, but it is important that he should be absent from his office several months in each year in order to visit the various agencies and inform himself directly of the condition and needs of the Indians. The advantages of such personal inspection of agencies to a wise administration of the office are acknowledged by all who are informed on the subject. During such prolonged absence the chief clerk must perform the duties and assume the responsibilities of the Commissioner, and it will not only give dignity and efficiency to his position, but bring it into harmony of organization with the other Bureaus of the Interior Department. The salary of \$3,000 proposed in the bill is the same as that allowed to the Assistant Commissioner in the Land and Patent Offices. To those who are acquainted with the present efficient chief clerk the salary will be regarded as very moderate.

The committee desire to call attention to the report of the present Indian Commissioner for the year 1885, on the subject of the clerical force in the Indian Bureau at Washington:

CLERICAL FORCE OF THE BUREAU IN WASHINGTON.

As the duties devolving on this branch of the Bureau are, in my opinion, most arduous and responsible, I have given the reorganization of the force special attention, and it is my purpose to have the *personnel* of the office most reliable and efficient. The amount and variety of business detail daily passing through the office, for the correctness and honesty of which I am considered responsible, is so great as to render a personal examination by any one man of the clerical work connected with it a physical impossibility. I am therefore compelled, in a majority of cases, to rely wholly upon the ability and integrity of my chief clerk and the heads of the different divisions of the office, who have the papers prepared for my signature; and for this reason I am anxious that the ability of the chief clerk and the chiefs of divisions under him should be of the highest character obtainable. To secure this, salaries commensurate with the responsibility and labor of their respective positions should be paid.

As will be seen from what immediately follows, it is my desire to assign to the chief clerk additional important labors. I deem it proper to call attention to the fact that the duties personally devolving upon the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, as the responsible head of the Indian Bureau, are unusually multiform, complicated, and onerous, and to properly discharge them requires much more time and attention than can be given during business hours. The good of the service leads me to suggest that Congress be asked to give this Bureau an Assistant Commissioner, who shall also perform the duties of chief clerk. To that officer could then be referred much of the routine work which may be performed equally well by another, but which now involves a large expenditure of time and labor on the part of the Commissioner, and to just that extent lessens his ability to devote his energies to the more important matters which relate to the general administration of Indian affairs.

The committee recommend that the accompanying bill do pass.